

Our Heritage

Every picture tells a story

Information for Teachers

Our heritage is not always about a distant time in history inhabited by relatives from a bygone age. Our Heritage can often be the encounters, conversations and experiences from our personal or collective history, moments in time captured perhaps in a photograph, a landscape or a special object. Such associations may mean little to others, but for the individual concerned who has invested in that object something of themselves that cannot be adequately captured in words, they resonate with emotion and history; heritage.

The 'Our Heritage' exhibition, created by The Open Centre in Derby and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, is an attempt to capture a sense of heritage through the lives of five contemporary families, each from different faiths and cultures, all of whom live in or close to Derby in the East Midlands. The exhibition is a multimedia experience (much of it interactive), with films, photographs, artefacts together with supporting text and resource materials. The exhibition seeks to inform the visitor about the five families, both their present lives and something of their past, but it is much more than this; it is a powerful stimulus that we hope will encourage everyone visiting or accessing the exhibition to reflect on their own heritage and to ask of themselves, 'Who am I?'

The cards in the resource pack contain a selection of high quality photographs of members of the five families together with photographs or objects chosen by the families themselves. The families had a free hand in choosing the objects they selected; they did not have to be 'religious' or old or of any great financial value, they simply had to be objects that had meaning and emotion to that family or members of it. In making their selection and allowing us to present them publically the families have allowed us into their world, their heritage and we ask that, in using the cards, you respect that generosity.

Many of the cards have text on one side and images on the other. The text seeks to convey a story or an explanation of the chosen object based on first hand interviews with family members. We hope that you may feel inspired to write your own text or story based on the photograph, maybe share it with others in recognition that every picture tells a story and each person will have their own unique insight and story to share.

Finally, the last card in the pack is a resource for teachers and educators and provides further ideas as to how these cards could be used with students to deepen their learning and encourage them to engage creatively with their own heritage.

Using the cards as a classroom resource

Suggestions for teachers and educators

Using photographs and artefacts in a structured and thoughtful way helps encourage higher order thinking in students. Students can be encouraged to express their thoughts verbally (in twos, small groups or to the whole class) or in the form of prose or poetry that can be read out, displayed or collated into a 'class set'.

Questions to help encourage reflection might include:

1. If you could only take and keep three objects from your own home at the point you had to leave it what would they be and why?
2. Select one of your own three special chosen objects and imagine it photographed and presented on a card. Write a story or an account that you would want to accompany it on the reverse.
3. Try to begin a dialogue within your family, involving as many generations as possible, based on 'Our Heritage'. What objects would each family member chose to select and retain as reminders of what was most important to them in their lives, past or present, and why? Are there similarities or trends or is everyone's choice very different?
4. We have seen that in the lives of the five families religion and faith are central to their way of living and identity. What is it that you believe is central to your identity and the identity of your family? Do you see your identity changing throughout your life?
5. Select one of the cards in the pack that has no text on the reverse. What is the story that this picture tells for you? Try to express your thoughts in a short story or a poem.
6. Invite in a speaker or staff from the Open Centre to lead a workshop in the classroom to talk about artefacts and why they are important in religious communities

For younger pupils:

- Invite pupils to bring in an object or photo of an object that is special to them and encourage them to talk about it. This can be in a circle time activity using the activity to develop speaking and listening skills as well as empathy and imagination. If appropriate the objects could be photographed and then presented as a class exhibition alongside a photograph of the pupil. It is a potentially powerful way in engage with spiritual, social, cultural and moral development in the classroom as well as creating an open and nurturing classroom culture.
- Invite in a speaker or staff from the Open Centre to lead a workshop in the classroom to talk about artefacts and why they are important in religious communities.